INTRODUCTION

When Professor Guzè Aquilina assumed the onerous responsibilities of the 'first' Chair of Maltese and Oriental Languages almost forty years ago, he immediately became the doyen of Maltese Language and Literature. Even when his immediate environment presented him with manifold problems taxing enough to engage all his energies, it was to his lasting credit and Malta's benefit that he broke through a traditionally closed island culture to make his own valid contributions to intellectual cross-currents in Europe.

Professor Aquilina's long tenancy has possibly been the most fruitful of all in the University of Malta, and it is almost impossible adequately to stress the indelible mark which he has made on Maltese and Arabic Studies by his great distinction in, and complete dedication to philological publication and research, his attempt to educate the masses, and his incessant defence of the Maltese language. He also possessed the foresight to create links with universities where Semitic languages are taught and studied. Through his cooperation and collaboration with scholars of note he started, and planned the extension of, a programme of Arabic studies that is even now gathering momentum.

The learned papers and articles by local and foreign scholars in this Festschrift edition of The Journal of Maltese Studies are some indication of the high esteem in which Professor Aquilina is held. His withdrawal from administrative duties (he is still engaged full-time in research on what will probably be his most significant contribution to Maltese linguistics - his Maltese-English Dictionary) has deprived the Department of Maltese and the Faculty of Arts of one of the most formative influences. This is going to prove a period of change and painful transition, necessarily so
because the progress of departments, just like the development of
language and literature, hardly ever runs smoothly along rigidly
predetermined lines.

As we look towards the future we guess that the new emphasis
will probably be on the team rather than on the man, a team dedica-
ted to the fostering of a community of culture that is not itself a
threat to either individualism or personal distinction.

In a fast-changing Faculty of a post-Dahrendorf University
where the key-words have become relevance and renewal, the best
strategy may be a courageous inter-departmental cooperation that
provides a multiplicity of options, flexible enough to test radical
alternatives and allow new syntheses to emerge from the clash of
old and new.

One possible line of expansion is the development of our own
line in Semitic studies where the spoken dialects of Arabic and
the living traditions of popular and contemporary Arabic literature
receive far closer attention than they do from European Orient-
alisists.

Another is to initiate a careful method of exploring our young
literature in terms of structural analysis, critical realism and other
theories to relate it both to our immediate and our wider socio-
cultural context of its development. We must transcend the either-
or mentality. Any system that polarizes absolutely becomes dys-
functional and counter-productive, because it contradicts the very
ways ideas work to achieve change.

There is one thing that must not be allowed to change, and that
is the continued dedication to the energetic development of the
Maltese language and literature. This is of the essence for rele-
vant education and cultural renewal. Unless this continues to be
actively promoted, knowledge and culture will not spread to the
people, and creative energies will not be released.

We shall not release these energies, however, by weakening
either the bi-culture or the study of international languages. World-
knowledge is growing at a tremendous rate, and the Maltese must
not only keep up with this growth within a reasonable time-scale,
but should make their own significant contributions to it. They
must strive to ride across cultures.

It is to the man who has already done so that this Festschrift is
dedicated.

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EPISTEMOLOGICAL REMARKS ON LANGUAGE
CHANGE AND LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS

by HELMUT LÜDTKE

1. Concepts

Research aiming at an explanation of language change may be
classified in the following stemma:

cause(s)

particular

universal

static
dynamic

according to the epistemological prerequisites adduced (whether
explicitly or not) by the single linguists. All those who claim that
every change that occurs in a given language is entirely due to
some particular language-external event in society must abandon
the search for a universal theory of language change. On the other
hand, admitting the possibility of, even engaging in the search for,
universal inherent laws that make every language change in no way
implies a denial of the influence of external factors. On the con-
trary, a dynamic approach as envisioned by E. Coseriu\(^1\) and by the
present author\(^2\) makes compatible two assumptions, viz. that lan-

\(^1\) E. Coseriu, 'Sincronia, diacronia e historia', *El problema del cambio
lingüístico* (Montevideo, 1958), ch. 2.3.3 (= pp. 43-46), and passim.

\(^2\) H. Lüdtke, 'Sprache als kybernetisches Phänomen', *Bibliotheca pne-
tica*, 9 (1970), 34-50; 'Zur Theoriebildung in der Phonetik', *Folia linguis-